

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

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received

date entered

1. Name

historic Engine Company No. 27; Fiedler and Shouldice factories; Augustus, Busch, Fiedler and Merzinger storefronts.

and/or common 1240-1260 North Wells Street District.

2. Location

street & number 1240-1260 North Wells Street _____ not for publication

city, town Chicago _____ vicinity of

state Illinois code 012 county Cook code 031

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☒ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☐ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☐ in process	☐ yes: restricted	☐ government
	☐ being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☐ museum
			☐ park
			☒ private residence
			☐ religious
			☐ scientific
			☐ transportation
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple, see continuation sheet

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cook County Recorder of Deeds

street & number 118 North Clark Street

city, town Chicago _____ state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Firehouse Survey has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes ☒ no

date 1983 _____ federal _____ state _____ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks

city, town Chicago _____ state Illinois

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☒ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved
☒ fair	☐ unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The west side of the 1200-block on North Wells Street between Scott and Goethe streets is surrounded today on the north and south by vacant lots, on the west by a parking lot and factory, and on the east by 1920s garage buildings and a new townhouse development. It is a small part of what was once a commercial street that stretched north from the Chicago River to Lincoln Park. State, Clark, Wells, Orleans and Sedgwick streets were the major north/south streets that served the commercial needs of the Near North Side with a mixture of retail, wholesale and manufacturing establishments.

The frontage of this particular block is composed of seven structures built between 1871 and 1888. They are described below in the order in which they were built, the number refers to their location on the map of this block which follows the descriptions:

1. 1252 NORTH WELLS STREET (originally 443 Wells Street) is a two-story frame storefront built immediately after the Chicago Fire of 1871. C. Augustus & Son, Grocers, occupied the site prior to the fire and re-established their business and residence there by the spring of 1872. Two other frame storefronts were also constructed on this block during the winter of 1871-72: one at 1254, Salter's hardware store, demolished in 1877; and one at 1256, Beilefeld's photography studio, demolished in 1875.

This two-story frame storefront with residence above is typical of the buildings erected immediately following the fire. Of necessity, they were balloon-frame structures designed and built by carpenters. This building is the commercial counterpart of the frame cottage which was then being erected throughout the area as Chicago began to rebuild. The ground floor front contains two large window display areas separated by the store entrance with an entrance to the second-floor apartment at the north end of the facade. The second floor front was originally sheathed in clapboards and contains three evenly spaced double-hung windows, slightly curved at their tops. Above was a simple cornice of wood moldings and brackets.

Today, this frame storefront retains its original design. The building does not have a basement and its foundation is not visible which may suggest that it rests on its original foundation of wood pilings. The second floor is sided with asphalt siding; however, the original clapboards can be seen on the north side wall. The cornice area has been boxed in; what remains of the original cornice is unknown.

The nominator is aware of the existence of only six examples of this building type from the immediate post-fire period of recovery.

2. 1244 NORTH WELLS STREET (originally 437 Wells Street) is the enginehouse for Engine Company No. 27 which was formed in 1873. It was built to house a second class rotary engine built by the Island Works of H. C. Silsby, Seneca Falls, New York. The City purchased the site in August 1873; and the enginehouse is listed in the Board of Public Works Annual Report for the year 1874. The building was designed and built by the Board of Public Works. The architect is unknown. The design is Italianate and is not similar to other stations built during this period.

The original enginehouse contained one bay and is a two-story structure plus basement. A one-story addition (2A.) was built to the south at a later date. The building is faced with an orange-red face brick, laid in Flemish bond, and trimmed with Joliet limestone and diaper work. The ground floor contains the garage bay and entrance with three intervening brick piers set on stone bases. The piers are detailed with an elongated recessed panel. The second story is separated from the first by a stone stringcourse which rests on a corbel course of dentils. Three double-hung windows (two-over-two) under full-round arches of stone with exaggerated keystones form an arcade across the second-story front. These are set in a larger recessed panel and two circular stones are set between the keystones. The parapet above extends beyond the main plane of the front on a series of diaper work corbels. The one-story bay addition carries out the general design of the original building.

Today, the masonry is painted, obscuring the original color and pattern of the facade. The entrance door is not original. Whether or not the garage doors are original is unknown. The parapet coping of terra-cotta is not original. The original hose drying/watch tower (the lookout for fires prior to the advent of call boxes) has since been truncated to a level slightly above the second story roof line. The interior was remodeled around 1926 to accommodate motorized vehicles which were replacing horse-drawn equipment.

Two other enginehouses from the 1870s survive today: 540 West Washington Street (1873), and 455 North Wolcott Street (1875). These are the oldest examples of firehouses in Chicago.

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3. 1256-1260 NORTH WELLS STREET (originally 447-451 Wells Street) is a three-story loft building with basement, built in 1875 by Anton B. Fiedler to house his factory, A.B. Fiedler and Sons. His firm imported and made dress trimmings, braids, tassels, etc. In 1876 he built an addition (3A) to the south of the original corner building, repeating the original design. The architect is unknown.

The two street facades (Wells and Goethe streets) are faced in an orange-red face brick with Joliet limestone trim. The Wells Street facade of the original structure is symmetrical and Italianate in style. The three stories are separated by continuous stone sill courses and contain five openings per floor. The ground floor, about two-and-one-half feet above grade, contains a central entrance. All openings are under full-round brick arches set on stone springers (their design is similar to those of the enginehouse) and have stone keystones. The keystone over the entrance has a tassel carved in full relief. The window sash is double-hung (two-over-two) with top sash full-round to meet the arch. The window and door openings are very large in comparison to the surrounding masonry piers and form an arcade at each story level. The 1876 addition carries out this design with three more window bays and an additional entrance at the ground floor. The Goethe Street facade is similar except that it is divided into five bays, each with three windows (four-over-four sash) and the openings on the ground and second floors are under brick segmented arches, rather than full-round arches, with stone keystones.

The major alterations to the structure have been the bricking up of window openings (however, the original fenestration is evident); the removal of a small cornice below the second-story sill course; the removal of the main cornice and the removal of what appears to have been a stone plaque above the third-story center window which no doubt said "A. B. Fiedler & Sons."

The age of this building makes it one of the earliest surviving examples of a loft structure known to the nominator. The interior appears to be wood joists supported on cast-iron columns (this needs to be confirmed).

4. 1254 NORTH WELLS STREET (originally 445 Wells Street) was built also by Anton B. Fiedler in 1878; the building permit is dated March 9, 1878. It is a three-and-one-half story plus basement, storefront and flat building. Two of Fiedler's sons are listed in the City Directories as living at this address. The original use of the storefront is unknown. The architect is unknown. It shares a party wall with Fiedler's factory to the north but is of an entirely different design.

The building is faced in an orange-red face brick and trimmed in Joliet limestone. Except for the ground floor, the facade is symmetrical with two double-hung windows paired in the center and flanked by single double-hung windows. Continuous stone sill courses divide the stories, and stone lintels with incised ornament form a stringcourse along the second and third stories. This masonry is supported above the ground floor on a cast-iron beam opening up the storefront of cast-iron and glass.

Today the storefront is boarded over. The only other alteration has been the removal of a sheet-metal cornice during the late 1940s.

5. 1246 NORTH WELLS STREET (originally 439 Wells Street) was built in 1885 by August Merzinger. It is a three-story plus basement, storefront and flat building. Merzinger operated a saloon in the storefront and lived above. The architect is unknown.

The building is a simple, straightforward design and is faced with brick and Joliet limestone. The storefront is spanned by a cast-iron beam; however, the storefront itself is made of wood and plate glass. The two storefront windows are separated by a doorway; a narrower door leading to the upper stories is located at the south side of the facade. The two upper stories contain each three evenly spaced double-hung windows with continuous stone sill courses and rectangular stone lintels. Below the sills and lintels are decorative courses of masonry, a soldier course with the bricks turned at a forty-five degree angle from the front plane. The parapet is capped by a stone coping.

Few changes have been made to the original front. The third story windows have been replaced with smaller units and the remaining opening filled with wood. The masonry is painted.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800–1899	☒ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☐ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☒ other (specify) neighborhood development

Specific dates Refer to item 7 **Builder/Architect** Refer to item 7

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

This block of North Wells Street is a rare surviving example of typical commercial street development in Chicago outside of the downtown area during the period that followed the Chicago Fire. Although other historic districts in Chicago portray residential development during the 1870s and 1880s, none contains an intact representative of the commercial development of the period. Two blocks to the east of this block is the Gold Coast District (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978) and four blocks to the north is the Old Town Triangle District (designated a Chicago Landmark in 1977); both districts contain representative examples of the residential development of the period. Other Chicago districts from this period (South Pullman, Tri-Taylor, Mid-North) are also residential. Milwaukee Avenue within the Wicker Park District provides the only example of similar commercial street development in the city. However, the period represented there ranges from the mid-1880s to the 1930s, and subsequent alterations and demolition render a Milwaukee Avenue streetscape incoherent in terms of presenting an overall view of the original commercial counterpart of the residential development from this earliest extant period. The continued existence of this block, as a cohesive element, provides a unique view and knowledge of the fabric of Chicago's oldest neighborhoods.

The fabric of this neighborhood development, the then pervasive character of the city, contained all aspects to satisfy community needs within a short walking distance; the city being in essence an aggregate of smaller town-like units. Amid the predominately residential quarters were the corner "convenience" stores—groceries, saloons. But centered within the neighborhood was the street which catered to the broader public and commercial interests of the community. This street became the focus of the neighborhood's identity, of its public transportation, and of its everyday life which was strongly rooted in the ethnic origins of its dominant population. This street developed along a similar pattern to the adjacent residences. Parcels were developed one lot at a time with relatively small buildings rather than large blocks. Buildings were most often owner-occupied and less often speculative; living over the store was common. The street encompassed a wide variety of uses in the days prior to the establishment of zoning ordinances. Development occurred, as it did in the surrounding area, over many years juxtaposing a wide variety of architectural styles and building types. Wells Street existed in tandem with and as a center for Old Town to the north and to the east, LaSalle Street and beyond, an enclave of settlement for Chicago's German population.

On this particular block, three buildings are rare, early examples of this period and type of development: the frame storefront (1871-72), which was built in the months immediately following the fire, was considered a "temporary" structure in the city's early efforts to rebuild; Engine Company No. 27 (1874) is the second oldest enginehouse surviving in the city; and Fiedler's manufactory (1875) is an early example of such loft structures.

The survival of these buildings as a complete block-long frontage is of equal interest and particular significance. Extensive redevelopment and land clearance on the Near North Side have all but obliterated the commercial street of this period. Similar forces have been at work on the Near West and Near South sides. Although these inner-city areas were fully redeveloped in the 1870s and 1880s, little from this period exists today. State, Clark, Wells, Orleans, and Sedgwick streets no longer possess the buildings of their earlier commercial development. To be sure, isolated structures from this period survive, but they lack the context of a consistent streetscape. The Wells Street block is significant because it is typical of this important period of redevelopment in Chicago, and it is also unique because this typical development has all but disappeared.

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6. 1240 NORTH WELLS STREET (originally 431 Wells Street), at the corner of Wells and Scott Street, was built by Samuel Shouldice in 1886; the building permit is dated March 3, 1886. Shouldice was a carriage maker and the building housed his factory. It is a two-story structure with a basement. The architect is unknown. Its overall appearance is similar to the other storefronts on the block despite its original manufacturing use. An addition (6A) was built to the rear of this building in 1929.

The original ground floor front on Wells Street appears to have been plate glass and cast-iron. The second-story front contains three evenly spaced double-hung windows. Built of an orange-red brick and Joliet limestone, this area today is covered over with vertical board siding from which the original decorative brick work protrudes: a series of brick corbels and piers which separate the windows and form the parapet. The original window openings survive although smaller window units blocked in with wood now fill them. The ground floor has been bricked up but an original brick pier with stone cap and cast-iron column can be seen beneath this change. The Scott Street facade has a large number of regularly spaced window openings which have been either reduced in size or covered over; however the original openings are discernable.

Although this structure has undergone the most extensive alterations on the block, its original appearance remains evident.

7. 1248 NORTH WELLS STREET (originally 441 Wells Street) was built by Herman Busch in 1888; the building permit is dated March 14, 1888. The architects were Emil Riegert and Charles Knorr. It is a three-story plus basement, storefront and flat building. Busch was a blacksmith and his shop was located across the street on the east side of Wells. He lived on an upper floor of this building. The original use of the storefront is unknown.

The storefront is of cast-iron and plate glass with a cast-iron beam carrying the masonry of the upper stories. The facade is constructed of an orange-red face brick, trimmed with stone, terra-cotta, and galvanized metal. The design is in the Queen Anne style. On the second floor a large oriel projects over the sidewalk; it is sheathed in galvanized metal. Adjacent to this oriel is a double-hung window set into a projecting frame of decorative masonry. The third story is treated similarly except that the oriel is replaced by a large window opening under a segmented arch. The sheet metal cornice is quite elaborate and is topped by a triangular and a scalloped pediment and is further decorated with a variety of classically detailed metal moldings.

The exterior design of the building survives intact today, although a false storefront hides the original one. The building has been painted, obscuring the variety of materials and colors of the facade.

In addition to these buildings, the gangway between 1248 and 1252 has been roofed over and enclosed to make a "shoebox-sized" storefront.

Although changes have occurred to the buildings on this block over the century since it was developed, these changes are readily identifiable. Their original designs remain evident.



